Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water for the Organization of the Amendment Conference

PTBT/CONF/M/SR.5
12 June 1990
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York
on Friday, 1 June 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. JAYASINGHE (Sri Lanka)

CONTENTS

General exchange of views (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS (continued) (PTBT/CONF/M/3 and 6)

1. Mr. OGRYZKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that, in the primary area of the whole disarmament process - nuclear disarmament - the question of halting nuclear tests occupied a special place. By ending nuclear tests, the world community would be applying a firm brake to the further refinement of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, each new test was a step towards the abyss, contradicting the logic of life, morality and common sense.

2. His delegation wished to support earlier assessments of the 1963 Moscow Treaty as a milestone on the way to a complete ban on nuclear weapons. The 1974 and 1976 "threshold treaties" between the USSR and the United States had marked the first step in limiting underground nuclear tests. The process of reaching agreement on protocols for verification under those treaties was currently nearing completion. The relevant agreement would be signed during the visit of President Gorbachev to the United States.

3. It was necessary, however, to move without delay to the following stage, involving a further curtailment of the number of nuclear tests and a reduction of their destructive power. A further possibility was a reciprocal moratorium by the USSR and the United States on all nuclear explosions, with other nuclear Powers joining in at a later stage. It could be a unique catalyst in elaborating a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty.

4. There was a need for the utmost mutual complementarity of bilateral and multilateral steps. The Conference on Disarmament must redouble its efforts to elaborate a treaty on the complete and universal prohibition of nuclear tests, the momentum for which could be imparted, inter alia, by the Amendment Conference.

5. The Ukrainian people were vitally interested in moving towards a non-nuclear world, because it had itself experienced a close brush with the nuclear danger. Various scientists had estimated that the radioactive fallout of the Chernobyl disaster had been equivalent to that resulting from the explosion of 90 atomic bombs of the kind dropped on Hiroshima. That was why the Government of the Ukraine had decided to appeal to the Governments and peoples of other countries and to international organizations for the world community to join forces in eliminating the aftermath of the disaster.

6. Much work remained to be done at the current Meeting: delegations had to agree on and adopt the agenda for the Conference, endorse the draft rules of procedure and consider other issues. For the rules of procedure, it would be possible to take as a basis the draft rules prepared for the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Sea-Bed Treaty. His delegation also considered that efforts should be made to reach consensus decisions at the Conference.

7. Mr. NYAKYI (United Republic of Tanzania) congratulated the President on his election and expressed confidence that under his leadership the Meeting would be a success.

8. Matters related to nuclear weapons and their testing were too important to be regarded as the exclusive domain of a few Powers, as witnessed by the support given to the 1963 Moscow Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 1910 (XVIII) of 27 November 1963.

9. Since then the question had been the subject of countless General Assembly resolutions, but all efforts against nuclear tests had resulted only in agreements on partial measures, allowing the continued development and manufacture of the deadly weapons.

10. The continuation of testing and of the arms race called into question the validity of the 1963 Treaty and underlined the urgent need for a more comprehensive test ban.

11. In joining the sponsors of the initiative for the Amendment Conference, Tanzania had demonstrated its desire not to remain a mere spectator at a time when weapons systems were being perfected and the danger of a nuclear war continued to increase, yet a complete test ban remained a distant goal despite the improved relations between the two super-Powers.

12. Against that background, his delegation considered that there was a need at the current Meeting to examine and make firm recommendations for the Amendment Conference.

13. His Government was convinced that international security could not be guaranteed merely by reducing the number of those who controlled nuclear weapons; the ultimate guarantee was their total abolition. A complete test ban would be the best way to ensure the integrity and authority of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. That Treaty had not stopped the continued growth in arsenals and in the variety of nuclear weapons. However, not all the Depository States had the determination to move forward which they had had in 1963: in the 1987 Treaty on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, the Soviet Union and the United States had undertaken to reduce their strategic arsenals by 30 per cent instead of the promised 50 per cent.

14. The participants in the current Meeting should hold the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union to their undertaking and should urge them to resume their negotiations on a complete nuclear-test-ban treaty. Such a treaty would not only slow down the arms race but would also stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons and provide an atmosphere conducive to meaningful disarmament negotiations.

15. Participants in the current deliberations must lend their political commitment to the goal before them in the spirit of co-operation and understanding.

READEX FICHE

16. Mr. MOULTRIE (Bahamas) said that the prevention of nuclear war and the promotion of nuclear disarmament must continue to be the highest priority of the international community. The Bahamas considered the Amendment Conference, which was to be convened under article II of the partial test-ban Treaty, to be of the utmost importance, particularly if it could take determined action to facilitate the process of drafting a comprehensive test-ban treaty. The commitment to the prevention of vertical proliferation must be shared by all members of the international community. A comprhensive test-ban treaty would undoubtedly be of vital importance to that process. The Bahamas was in favour of such a treaty because, in its view, it would help prevent the development and deployment of new nuclear weapons systems.

17. The relaxation of international tensions created a more favourable climate for objective negotiations on a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons tests. The signing of the INF Treaty, troop reductions in Europe and the almost universal call for peaceful coexistence suggested that further progress was possible. He expressed the hope that the Washington summit would yield positive results leading to further arms reduction. In view of the positive East-West dynamics, the earlier concept of "security", viewed from the narrow perspective of military balance, must be reviewed. There was no longer any need for the nuclear-weapon Powers and their allies to base their security on continuation of the nuclear arms race. Concrete efforts carried out by all States in good faith were needed to move expeditiously towards a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Such efforts would be consistent with article VI of the non-proliferation Treaty which emphasized confidence-building with acceptable security assurances for all States. The present organizational meeting was an opportunity to focus international attention on the critical issues and to identify areas in which meaningful progress could be made towards the signing of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

18. Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia) noted that the meeting was taking place against a backdrop of encouraging developments in the area of arms limitation and disarmament. There was a growing understanding of new concepts and approaches to security and disarmament. At the same time there was no escaping the fact that the acquisition of armaments, both nuclear and convention, was continuing unabated.

19. The international community's preoccupation with the qualitative aspects of the arms race had been fully reflected in the more than 70 resolutions on a comprrehensive test-ban treaty adopted by the General Assembly. More than a quarter of a century had elapsed since the three depositary States of the 1963 partial test-ban Treaty had committed themselves "to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time, determined to continue negotiations to this end". The test ban had particular significance for the non-proliferation Treaty because the depositary States had undertaken to refrain from vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons and the non-nuclear States, in turn, had undertaken to refrain from horizontal proliferation.

20. Since the entry into force of the non-proliferation Treaty there had been a drastic increase in the number of warheads, delivery capabilities had become technologically more advanced and work on creating even more sophisticated

(Mr. Sutresna, Indonesia)

nuclear-weapon systems had continued. In that context the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Belgrade in 1989, had stated that a comprehensive test-ban treaty was essential to preserve the non-proliferation régime established under the non-proliferation Treaty, which had been an effective instrument for preventing horizontal proliferation even though it had failed to stem vertical proliferation.

21. The INF Treaty was a first step in the practical implementation of the obligations under article VI of the non-proliferation Treaty. Since the signing of that Treaty had not produced any militarily significant reduction in existing or planned strategic weapons systems or slowed down the introduction of new and more dangerous technologies, the issue of arms cuts should be considered hand-in-hand with the cessation of testing. The Secretary-General had put it succinctly in his report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session: "the increasing sophistication of new weapons and their proliferation ... aggravate the already existing difficulties ... It is important to ensure that a qualitative arms race will not follow quantitative disarmament". (A/44/1, part V, eighth paragraph).

22. Unfortunately, no tangible progress had been made in that area, despite protracted debates and discussions. The two major nuclear Powers had not agreed to declare a moratorium on tests to be followed within a specific time period by substantive talks on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Furthermore, it was incorrect to contend that the efforts being made to implement the threshold test-ban Treaty and the peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty contributed to the cessation of the nuclear arms race. Indeed, they would, on the contrary, legitimize continuation of the arms race to suit the particular strategic interests of the nuclear Powers.

23. The persistent refusal of some nuclear Powers to live up to the commitments they had undertaken in relevant treaties and the wide-ranging implications of continued testing of nuclear weapons had led Venezuela, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia to put forward proposals calling for the convening of a conference to amend the partial test-ban Treaty. They had done so in accordance with the amendment procedure contained in the Treaty. Despite the differences on certain aspects, States from all regions of the world had expressed the conviction that a comprehensive test on nuclear weapons was of the highest priority. The conclusion of a comprehensive and universal treaty banning nuclear-weapons tests was now a compelling objective that could brook no delay.

24. The PRESIDENT expressed the hope that the afternoon meeting would be able to start promptly at 3 p.m., since it was to take up a whole series of organizational issues relating to the rules of procedure and background papers. In addition, he intended to report on the informal consultations which had been held on matters relating to the agenda. He also hoped that the morning meeting scheduled for Monday, 4 June, would start at 10 a.m. sharp, because there were already 18 delegations on the list of speakers for that meeting.

25. The SECRETARY-GENERAL of the Meeting informed delegations that the Group of Western European States would meet in Conference Room 9 immediately after the meeting.

26. Mr. MARIN-BASCH (Mexico), recalling that at the previous meeting the Secretary-General had said that he would be able to inform participants when they were likely to receive the draft rules of procedure, suggested that he might like to comment on that issue.

27. The SECRETARY-GENERAL of the Meeting said that at the first organizational meeting, which had taken place the day before, a question had been raised concerning the preparation and subsequent consideration of the preliminary draft rules of procedure. He was prepared to reaffirm what he had stated then, and he wished also to state that the Secretariat had anticipated that question and had consulted the Office of Legal Affairs, which was currently preparing the draft rules of procedure in co-operation and consultation with the Secretariat. They would be circulated in the very near future. The Secretariat would make every effort to have some kind of initial draft circulated, in one form or another, perhaps as early as the next meeting.

28. The PRESIDENT said that he was following the matter personally and could confirm that the Secretariat was doing all that it could in that connection and that something would be provided that same afternoon.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.